

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 424  
By Herron

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend radio stations WCMT  
AM-FM (Martin) and WCDZ FM (Dresden).

WHEREAS, two of Tennessee's best radio stations WCMT AM-FM (Martin) and WCDZ FM (Dresden) are celebrating their fortieth anniversary, an important milestone in their distinguished history; and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 1957, WCMT AM, began broadcasting on the airwaves. This new radio station in Martin, with 1,000 watts of power, reached Northwest Tennessee, Southwest Kentucky, Northeast Arkansas, Southeast Missouri and Northern Illinois; and

WHEREAS, WCMT, with its call letters standing for Weakley County Martin, Tennessee, was built about a mile north of Martin in a pasture off Highway 45 North (now North Lind Street). The call letters were unique and were the subject of a Memphis newspaper column; and

WHEREAS, Jones T. Sudbury was the sole owner of the station and placed the station on the air in Martin as a business venture to allow another family-owned radio station, KLCN 910 radio in Blytheville, Arkansas, to remain free of interference from other signals; and

WHEREAS, the land where the station is located was sold to Sudbury by Cliff and Virginia Wells, who were allowed to keep their cows grazing on the pasture under the 180-foot station tower; and

WHEREAS, much of the early radio equipment used for broadcasting was old and had been previously used by KLCN radio; start-up costs were kept to a minimum; and

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WHEREAS, needless to say, the community was curious and interested in this new voice on the radio dial; and

WHEREAS, Alabama native Will Coker was hired as the first station manager. He put together a small staff and WCMT became a part of the county's lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, in absence of the Mayor, Alderman Billy McAdoo is reported to have said the first word broadcast on the airwaves: "Hello"; and

WHEREAS, while citizens marveled at the new "voice" of Weakley County, WCMT struggled to be profitable in its early days of broadcasting, even though the radio station was strongly supported solely by its advertisers; and

WHEREAS, a 30-second ad sold for about 25 cents. FCC regulation permitted the station to broadcast only from 7:30 a.m. until local sunset. There was no nighttime radio at the time; and

WHEREAS, it was not until November 1958 that the station truly began to prosper. At that time, Paris radio advertising salesman Dwight A "Duke" Drumm became the new station manager; and

WHEREAS, he was a colorful personality and was known for his strong authoritative voice which was utilized for the ads that were broadcast on the station; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Drumm was very popular in the community and became active in all aspects of community life, including a fundraising drive to expand the size of the university's football stadium. He is credited with making WCMT a public servant and for the station's financial success; and

WHEREAS, in addition to music and weather programming, Drumm added local news and play-by-play sports to complete the station's new image. WCMT aired live remote broadcasts and played a variety of music to serve the audience's taste; and

WHEREAS, Doris Gill became the station's full-time secretary and bookkeeper and held the position for 20 years. Herb Cathey was hired as the station's first full-time engineer and remained with the station for 15 years; and

WHEREAS, because the station was forced to sign off at sunset, WCMT needed an FM station to broadcast high school and college games "live" instead of recording the games on tape and playing them back the next day; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Drumm persuaded Mr. Sudbury to seek an FM channel, and on October 1, 1968, WCMT FM was added to the airwaves. Known as WCMT's "sister station", WCMT FM soon began broadcasting live local election returns and University of Tennessee at Martin football and basketball games; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Drumm was instrumental in WCMT opening its microphones to a popular quartet program hosted by J.T. Jones on Sundays; Wilbur Vaughn aired the Dixie Farm News daily which featured hundreds of human interest interviews; and

WHEREAS, WCMT also aired a variety of block programming, offering everything from organ music to hymns, country and pop music. The Swap Shop and hospital report were included in the format; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, Mr. Drumm retired, and Mr. Sudbury sold WCMT to Harold T. Brundige, a local attorney who formed Thunderbolt Broadcasting Co. and began operating WCMT in March of 1980. Tony Youngblood and later Don Goodlow were station managers during Mr. Brundige's tenure; and

WHEREAS, in 1981 Paul Tinkle, who was originally hired as a janitor at the station in 1970, returned to WCMT and was employed as news director. He was promoted to station manager in late 1982 and was named "Broadcaster of the Year" by the Tennessee Associated Press Broadcasters Association in 1992 and president of the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters in 1994; and

WHEREAS, under his leadership, WCMT improved its local news and sports coverage and won every state award for news and sports in the 80s. Mr. Tinkle became a partner with Brundige, Larry Parrish, Mike Maloan and Tommy Moore. In 1985 Maloan sold his interest, and Fred Stoker, Jim Fisher and Jimmy Smith became partners in the company; and

WHEREAS, following deregulation by the FCC in the mid 80's , WCMT AM became a 24-hour-a-day station with reduced nighttime power. Until then the station had been required to sign off the air at local sunset because of interference with other stations on the dial; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, a new 328-foot tower was constructed, and new transmitters and other broadcasting equipment were purchased to continue the technical upgrading of the station; and

WHEREAS, WCMT FM doubled its power from 3,000 watts to 6,000 watts; and

WHEREAS, in July, 1992, Mr. Brundige sold his interest in the station, and Mr. Tinkle was named president of Thunderbolt Broadcasting; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, Thunderbolt purchased 6,000-watt WCDZ FM 95.1 in Dresden (formerly WGNN) from Valley Wide Broadcasting of Camden and moved the studios to its Martin studios to better serve the listeners. The 350-foot tower remains in the Dresden industrial park; and

WHEREAS, WCMT has become a household word to listeners of the tremendously popular show "Good Time in the Morning, with Chris and Paul," while WCDZ 95.1 CD Country keeps listeners entertained with the "Sunrise Guys"; and

WHEREAS, other popular programs include Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, Vol. Calls, UT Martin and Tennessee ball games, Atlanta Braves baseball, Coaches Corner, Swap Shop and the informative local news programs; and

WHEREAS, because of the invention of digital audio, commercials are aired in digital stereo and are broadcast by computers. No "records" are played, because all music is aired on

compact discs. Radio technology has changed dramatically from the days when commercials were taped on a reel-to-reel player, or performed “live” by the announcers; and

WHEREAS, in addition to its community involvement and public service programs, WCMT AM and FM and WCDZ FM have served as a training ground for numerous UTM students by providing internships and an opportunity for them to work their way through college; and

WHEREAS, the stations have also held radiothons for St. Jude, Community Development Services and We Care Ministries, have helped the needy with the Can Caravan food drive, have broadcast thousands of ballgames, and have been a friendly companion to listeners for 40 years; and

WHEREAS, the three stations, WCMT AM 1410, WCMT FM 101.7 and WCDZ FM 95.1 continue to broadcast 24 hours daily from the studio at 733 North Lindell Street in Martin. Plans are underway for continued upgrade of the stations; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we pause to honor and congratulate radio stations WCMT AM-FM (Martin) and WCDZ FM (Dresden) on their fortieth anniversary; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor and congratulate the owners and expert staff of radio stations WCMT AM and FM (Martin) and WCDZ (Dresden) on their fortieth anniversary and wish them much continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.